

REPORTED INCIDENCE OF CHILD ABUSE

Objective

By 1990, injuries and deaths to children inflicted by abusing parents should be reduced by at least 25 percent.

Explanatory Notes

Cases are the number of abused and neglected children (ages 0-17) reported to the North Carolina Central Registry. A case is confirmed or not following investigation by the resident county's Department of Social Services. North Carolina's mandatory child abuse reporting law was passed in 1971, but data prior to FY1977 may not be comparable to that reported after. Reported deaths due to child abuse are considered to be unreliable counts of the actual incidence. Reported cases also do not reflect actual incidence; a national study conducted in 1980 found that only one case of child maltreatment in every three had been reported to a child protective agency (3).

Findings

In eight of the ten years from 1977 to 1987, the number of cases reported to the North Carolina Central Registry rose, for an overall increase of 125 percent. However, improved surveillance and reporting practices may account for some of the increase. Reliable national data are not available, but estimates indicate an increase of 158 percent in reported cases in the eight years from 1976 to 1984 (3).

In North Carolina, 40-43 percent of reported cases were confirmed in each fiscal year 1977 to 1984. That percentage then dropped, to 38% in 1985, 36% in 1986, and 35% in 1987. Reasons for these declines are unknown, but if recent trends continue, only 31% of reported cases will be confirmed in FY1990.

Data Source

Child Protective Service Unit
North Carolina Division of Social Services